UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/779
22 November 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Fiftieth session
Agenda item 35

QUESTION OF THE COMORIAN ISLAND OF MAYOTTE

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 28 November 1994, the General Assembly adopted resolution 49/18 on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte. In paragraphs 5 and 6 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to maintain continuous contact with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with regard to the problem, to make available his good offices in the search for a peaceful negotiated solution, and to report on the matter to the Assembly at its fiftieth session.

2. On 12 May 1995, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representatives of the Comoros and of France to the United Nations drawing their attention to the contents of General Assembly resolution 49/18 and inviting them to provide him with any pertinent information for inclusion in his report to the Assembly.

3. Also on 12 May 1995, the Secretary-General addressed a letter to the Secretary-General of OAU, drawing his attention to paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 49/18, and requesting information on any action undertaken by OAU in the search for a peaceful negotiated solution to the problem.

4. In accordance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 49/18, the present report, based on the replies received from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, the Permanent Mission of the Comoros to the United Nations and OAU, is submitted to the General Assembly.

95-36888 (E) 291195 301195 021295

/...

II. INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION OF FRANCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

5. On 3 October 1995, the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed a note verbale to the Secretary-General, the text of which reads as follows:

> "France remains willing to promote a just and lasting solution in conformity with its Constitution and on the basis of respect for the wishes of the peoples concerned. The population voted freely and democratically in favour of maintaining the territory of Mayotte within the French Republic. A constructive dialogue is continually taking place at the highest level with the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros. France is convinced that such consultation should be pursued in an unwavering spirit of accommodation, conciliation and openness."

III. INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COMOROS

6. On 17 October 1995, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Comoros transmitted the following information to the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

> "Since acceding to independence on 6 July 1975, the Comorian Government has, in its various reports addressed to the Secretary-General, regularly provided details essential to an understanding of the question of Mayotte. It has continually kept the Secretariat informed of developments in the situation to date.
>
> "The Government therefore considers it necessary in this report, in addition to the details already provided in earlier documents, to bring to your attention the Government's proposals for a positive and constructive approach to the question of Mayotte which takes account both of current realities and of the need to adapt it to the human and economic imperatives of the times.
>
> "The Comorian Government believes that it is high time for the French and Comorian parties to translate into action their mutual and often-expressed determination to resolve this painful dispute.
>
> "The Comorian Government is aware of the complexity of this issue. It also has no doubt about the embarrassment the French Government must feel concerning this matter, given the quality of the relations existing between the two countries. However, we are compelled to note that the situation has scarcely changed in the 20 years that this dispute has lasted. During this time, the gulf between the Comorians of Mayotte and those from the other sister islands has continued to widen.
>
> "We also feel compelled to note that the restrictive and selective administrative measures which the inhabitants of the three other islands of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros must comply with upon entering Mayotte can only serve to entrench the feeling of separation even further.

"Accordingly, desiring both to defuse tensions and steadfastly to seek a crucial compromise, the Comorian Government offers the following proposals and invites the French Government to give them favourable consideration, with a view to permitting the establishment of an unconditional, open and constructive dialogue.

"The Comorian Government continues to believe that a solution to the problem of Mayotte is quite possible, provided that the two parties agree on a strategy and a pragmatic view of the issue which will enable those involved to break away from the stalemate in the situation.

"The events which have marked the recent history of our country have shown, legal issues aside, how powerful and close relations are between France and the Comoros. That is why we believe that it is high time to do everything possible to ensure that reason prevails over all other considerations and that a way is found to settle this matter in the best interests of all the parties concerned.

"The Comorian Government therefore proposes to France the establishment of a joint Franco-Comorian commission whose mission will be to explore all options available to the two Governments under the law and whose efforts will promote a rapprochement between the inhabitants of the four islands.

"Indeed, the destiny long shared by the inhabitants of all the islands has led to a permanent intermingling that has created blood ties which, notwithstanding the special status of Mayotte, have perpetuated a firmly rooted feeling of solidarity and fraternity among the peoples of the four islands.

"In the same spirit, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros hopes that:

"(a) France, a special partner, will pursue a policy of cooperation aimed at promoting an economic realignment among the three islands and Mayotte, with a view to gradually reintegrating Mayotte into the Comorian group as a whole;

"(b) The elaboration of a programme of integrated development will enable the authorities of the two parties to ensure a progressive rapprochement between Mayotte and its sister islands.

"It is also necessary to realize that there is no real future for Mayotte if it evolves alone. Since the times favour regional groupings, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros is firmly convinced of the need to include Mayotte in the dynamics and process of regional integration in which its sister islands in the Indian Ocean are involved.

"In view of the foregoing, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

"(a) To use his influence with the senior French authorities to ensure that they favour dialogue in the search for a viable solution to the problem of Mayotte, and

"(b) Ensure that they take no action that would compromise the climate of entente, understanding and mutual appreciation that has always prevailed in Franco-Comorian relations.

"Lastly, the Comorian Government requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to keep the question of the Comorian Island of Mayotte on the agenda of forthcoming regular sessions until a final settlement has been reached."

IV. INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

7. In a letter dated 13 November 1995 addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Executive Secretary and Permanent Observer of OAU to the United Nations informed him that:

"The Council of Ministers of OAU at its sixty-first ordinary session held from 23 to 27 January 1995 in Addis Ababa adopted resolution CM/Res.1565 (LXI) on the question of the Comorian Island of Mayotte, in which it reaffirmed Africa's solidarity with the people of the Comoros in their determination to recover their political integrity and to defend the territorial integrity of the Comoros by reintegrating the island of Mayotte into the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros. In this resolution, the Council appealed to all OAU member States to condemn and disregard any action which could be taken by France to force the Comorian Island of Mayotte to participate in events where distinction could be made between the latter and the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros. It also urged the French Government to satisfy the legitimate claims of the Comoros, in accordance with resolutions adopted by the OAU, the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement. The Council, moreover, condemned the introduction of entry visas into Mayotte for Comorian citizens of the other three islands. It also urged the OAU Ad Hoc Committee of Seven to convene before the thirty-first ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU to consider ways and means of facilitating the resumption of the dialogue with the French Government.

"Pursuant to resolution CM/Res.1565 (LXI), the OAU Ad Hoc Committee of Seven, composed of Gabon, Algeria, Cameroon, the Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique and Senegal, held its seventh meeting on 22 June 1995 in Addis Ababa, in conjunction with the work of the sixty-second ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of OAU.

"After having given close consideration to developments connected with the question of the Comorian Island of Mayotte and having noted the lack of progress in the negotiations between the Comorian and French authorities on the return of Mayotte to the Comoros as a whole, the Committee decided to revitalize its work by recommending that the OAU Summit Conference should

take certain steps at its thirty-first ordinary session. It recommended the holding of a meeting of the heads of State of the member countries of the Ad Hoc Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, to study the best ways and means of reviving the dialogue on the question. It also recommended the submission, to the General Assembly at its current session, of a draft resolution sponsored by the OAU member States reaffirming the common position of Africa on the question and reiterating its solidarity with the people of the Comoros in their determination to regain their rights respecting the island of Mayotte.

"The Conference of Heads of State and Government at its thirty-first ordinary session, held from 26 to 28 June 1995 in Addis Ababa, took note of the report of the ministerial Ad Hoc Committee of Seven and adopted resolution AHG/Res.241 (XXI) endorsing the recommendations for the revitalization of the Committee's work.

"Pursuant to those recommendations, the Head of State of Gabon had proposed to his counterparts in the Ad Hoc Committee of Seven that a meeting should be held in New York on 4 and 5 October 1995 for an exchange of views on the best way of reviving the dialogue with the French Government. Unfortunately, this meeting could not be held because of the new situation that arose in the archipelago of the Comoros as a result of the coup d'état perpetrated at the end of September 1995 by mercenaries led by Mr. Bob Denard.

"The question of the Comorian island of Mayotte remains on the agenda of OAU which will continue to follow developments in the island closely."

V. REMARKS

8. The Secretary-General has maintained close contact with all parties and has informed them of his readiness to make available his good offices in the search for a peaceful solution to the problem.